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Sketches of PAROCHIAL LIFE and Character

by
The Silent Member.



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E. W. ALLEN, AVE MARIA LANE, E.C.

1880.

SKETCHES
OF
PAROCHIAL LIFE AND
CHARACTER.

BY
THE SILENT MEMBER.



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LONDON
BRADBURY, AGNEW, & CO., PRINTERS, WHITEFRIARS.



PREFATORY.

LOR nine years the writer of the following pages toiled in the parochial vineyard —a silent worker. As a relief to the drudgery of his daily labour he jotted down from time to time a few notes respecting the habits and idiosyncrasies of his fellow-workers. A few pages of his note-book are now given, and the types of character there set forth are neither exaggerated in detail, nor exceptional in character. Some are to be met with in every governing board throughout the country, wherever the glorious principle of local self-government is carried out. The variety of character and strong individuality in English public life give a colour and a charm to a grand principle; for though here and there a

public position may be abused and the freedom of speech disgraced, the principle of self-government yet stands out prominently as one of the greatest blessings ever conferred upon a free people; since it entrusts liberty to the individual, and adds strength and stability to the nation. It would, perhaps, be difficult to over-estimate the value to the State of those gratuitous and self-sacrificing services which our public men render day by day with so much zeal and devotion.

Whilst admitting freely the great and substantial services thus rendered, we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that the whole machinery of local self-government is capable of great improvement. An impartial observer cannot fail to notice the incongruities and absurdities, the great waste of power and extravagance in detail to be found in local administration. Taking a general survey of the whole system of local government, it would really seem as if the Legislature had desired to obtain the smallest amount of good at the greatest

possible expense. Year by year it has been calling into being additional governing powers, gifted with enormous preying instincts, and managed by a separate staff of officials. Of course English public life is a growth rather than a creation. It was never turned out of any intellectual workshop a complete and finished and perfectly-proportioned specimen of art—like, for instance, an utterly impracticable, but strictly logical French Constitution—but such as one sees it, it is the work of many men and the growth of many years. We may well ask ourselves, however, whether the time has not arrived for bringing something like simplicity and order and economy into our complex system of local government? Granting, for the nonce, that Parliamentary Representation may be allowed to stand by itself in all its grandeur and dignity, it would be difficult to devise any valid excuse for continuing any longer the elaborate and expensive machinery at present existing for the election of other representatives of the people. In the Metropolis the members of

the School Board, Vestries, and Board of Guardians are elected in a different way to each other, and at different times ; whereas much simplicity and economy would be effected if an opportunity were given to the ratepayers to express their choice of selection at one and the same time, either by the system of voting papers, as in the Guardians' election, or by means of the ballot, as in the case of the School Board.

Then, again, let us take the system at present in vogue for collecting rates and taxes—a system which positively bristles with absurdities and things hard to be understood—a system which, to say the least of it, is fearfully and wonderfully made. Why the individual occupier should be compelled to pay his taxes at one given time and his rates at another ; and why two sets of collectors and other officials should be kept to add to the troubles of the already over-rated and over-taxed occupier, are questions which are easily asked but not so easily answered. The time will no doubt come when all such things will be con-

solidated ; and when this is done, a still further improvement may be effected by levying all such contributions upon the owner of property, who in his turn could charge the tenant a lump sum for rent and local charges.

But this would be, no doubt, too bold an experiment, and so an alternative scheme might be tried of utilising the district post-offices as centres for the payment of all rates and taxes ; but even this proposition at the present time would be too much for the equanimity of the officials of Somerset House, who, in using the post-offices for the payment of certain charges, somewhat strangely draw the line at the dog-tax ! We might go into further details as to the immense saving which would be effected not only in official salaries, but in office rent, printing, stationery, &c., if consolidation were carried out ; but we forbear. The saving of expense in carrying out such a scheme would be so considerable and the advantages so numerous, that we despair of seeing it carried out in the present or even in the next generation.

And yet the Ministry which signalised its existence by reforming the present system of local government and taxation in the Metropolis would earn the gratitude of four millions of people ; and make a name in history of which any Government might be proud.

But whilst despairing of seeing any attempt by the Legislature to improve local self-government in the Metropolis, we may yet look to the rate-payers of London to make the most of the present system. Thanks to their supineness and utter indifference, individuals without the slightest qualification for legislating for their fellows—busy nobodies without education or refinement—are enabled to thrust themselves into public positions and to bring discredit upon public life. Such men have generally some object in view beyond that of serving the public ; but whatever the object, the effect produced upon the public mind by such representatives is undoubted and is much to be deplored. The services of men of high character are too often ignored whilst the vagaries and in-

discretions of vulgarity are remembered ; indeed, a whole body is often judged by the character and conduct of one or two of its unruly members. It may be stated without fear of contradiction that scenes are enacted at times at our Vestry Meetings which bring considerable discredit upon local government ; but the offender or offenders go unpunished, for the public is either indifferent to what is going on, or it may be only too anxious to encourage the offender ; for somehow or other an idea obtains with the ignorant and ill-educated ratepayer that noise means usefulness, and vulgarity an effective check upon authority. Some of our Local Boards would do well to take the Red Indians as an example of legislative wisdom and decorum—that is, if the following ideal picture drawn by Sir Francis Head can be relied upon. “ Nothing,” says Sir Francis, “ can be more interesting, or offer to the civilised world a more useful lesson, than the manner in which the red aborigines of America, without ever interrupting each other, conduct their councils. The calm

dignity of their demeanour—the scientific manner in which they progressively construct the framework of whatever subject they undertake to explain—the sound argument by which they connect, as well as support it—and the beautiful wild flowers of eloquence with which they adorn every portion of the moral architecture they are constructing—form altogether an exhibition of grave interest ; and yet these orators are men whose lips and gums are, while they speak, black from the berries on which they subsist.”

This is indeed a delightful picture, and although we ourselves can boast of representatives capable of indulging in “beautiful wild flowers of eloquence,” we know of no Metropolitan Vestry which can compete with the Red Indians in their high standard of legislative excellence. Perhaps the wild vestrymen of the woods are not elected by the ratepayers, which will more than account for their excellent behaviour and peculiar fitness for office. In any case it is evident enough that one or two members whose

characters are faintly sketched in the following pages would meet with summary treatment amongst Sir Francis Head's dark friends; and all admirers of local self-government may well sigh for the day when the Red Indian will take his place at Spring Gardens, and shed his benign influence over the various Local Boards of the Metropolis.





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SKETCHES OF PAROCHIAL LIFE AND CHARACTER.

No. 1.—MY ELECTION.

“OME men are born to honours, some achieve honours, and some have honours thrust upon them.” As a vestryman I come within the latter category, as the short and simple story of my election will plainly show. “We have much pleasure in announcing that Mr. Popkins, the talented author of ‘Did you ever? a Political Satire,’ has accepted the nomination of the Ratepayers’ League.”

Such was the announcement which appeared in the “Local Gusher” a few days after taking up

my residence in the parish of —. The paragraph was correct in every particular save one—it lacked truth. It was an attempt to make me, *malgré moi*, a candidate for vestry honours—to lead me from my books into the devious crooks and crannies of public life; and I determined to resist it to the uttermost. Besides, what did I know of local questions, of parish squabbles, of the ethics of dust, of the utilisation of sewage, of flank frontages and sewers' charges, to say nothing of the thousand and one questions which, ever and anon, agitate the parochial mind? Nothing—literally, absolutely nothing!

And, further, what good object could I secure by giving up to the parish that which was meant for womankind? I was not a solicitor on the look-out for practice, nor a surveyor in search of a job. I had no son or nephew specially qualified for a collector's appointment. I was not sleeping partner to a contractor. I held no property which was over-rated, and besides had no interest in the "taking-to" or non "taking-to" of

any particular road. There was no paid official in the parish whose salary I was desirous to see increased, or whose body I was anxious to turn into an animated nutmeg-grater by continuous and incessant probing. I never made a speech in my life, and therefore could have no ambition to see my name printed in capitals in the local papers.

But my friends insisted, nevertheless, on my becoming a vestryman, and assured me that, after hibernating for a season as a silent member, I might sprout into an overseer, and ultimately blossom into a churchwarden ! I was further informed that, as overseer, I should only have two duties to perform—to summon defaulters for their rates, and to receive a service of plate at the end of my year of office for doing so. The duties of a churchwarden, according to my informants, were more multifarious. He was required to sit in a large curtained pew, to hold the plate, to dole out loaves of bread to the poor, and to receive the obsequious obeisance of the beadle !

Pictures of possible future greatness and of extended usefulness to my fellow-men were dangled before me, and pressed upon me with much argumentative force by one or two of my friends, but my mind was made up. I had tasted the blessedness of being little, and I had witnessed in others the wretchedness of being great!

At the time of which I am writing there were two associations in our parish—"The Ratepayers' League" and "The Defence League." The former, which had branches in several other parishes, consisted of one clever man and five devoted adherents ; and the latter, which was exclusively local, of three members only—the chairman, the treasurer, and the secretary. Both societies were very influential, but of the two, perhaps, the "Defence League" elected more members, printed more posters, and made more noise. The objects which both had in view were laudable in the extreme ; but the public, always grumbling at "parochial mismanagement" and "oppressive rates," held aloof from either.

Such was the state of parties in our parish when the paragraph already alluded to appeared in the "Gusher." On the Monday after its publication, whilst in "the bosom of my family"—wherever that may be—our Mary Ann suddenly became visible in our midst, for all the world like a ricochet shot from the "Woolwich Infant" with part of a charge of powder behind her still unconsumed. Indeed those of my readers who have never seen a periwinkle in a profuse state of perspiration, or a shrimp expire in the throes of a teeth-cutting convulsion, can have no idea of the fright depicted on the frontispiece of "our Mary Ann" as she announced that a "deputation" of six gentlemen wanted to see me directly.

Now it was not the time of year for "the waits;" I had not had time to run up large bills at six shops; I was not aware that the district church was without a steeple, nor had I been informed that any Wesleyan chapel in the neighbourhood was in debt. Neither was I blessed

with six country cousins who could conspire to visit me at one and the same time.

Whilst speculating on the kind of "deputation" which awaited me, the six gentlemen made their appearance ; and, strange to say, the gentleman who introduced himself to me as the chairman of the Ratepayers' League was an old schoolfellow whom I had not seen for many years.

" My dear Popkins," was his first exclamation, " I am delighted to see you—to congratulate you on your literary success. You are just the man we want. We have been trying, year after year, to educate the benighted ratepayer ; but the benighted ratepayer persistently refuses to be educated. And now we are going to try another experiment. We have bought up the sixtieth share in a penny 'local,' and we want a gentleman of known literary abilities like yourself to——"

" Pray stop, gentlemen ; this has taken me quite by surprise, and I'm sorry to say that Mrs. Pop-

kins has gone out, and taken the key of the wine cellar with her."

"Perfectly immaterial to us, I assure you," remarked the Chairman. "The members of our Association take no refreshment at any one's expense but their own when on duty. We are determined to 'put down' all parochial refreshment; and we hope to be as successful in our crusade as the late Sir Peter Laurie, whose peculiar mission, as you are aware, was to 'put down' suicide. Why, sir, it's a positive fact that the members of our 'drain' committee, after being out all day on survey, actually dine together at 3s. 6d. a head! It's monstrous, sir, and must be 'put down.'"

"Before going into these matters any further, I may as well remark that I have only just come into this parish, and, therefore, not eligible to go to election."

"Not material at all, my dear sir. We have taken the opinion of Mr. Towser, Q.C., a most eminent parochial lawyer, on the interpretation to

be put upon the 6th section of the 18th & 19th Vict., cap. 120; and in his opinion the proviso of the 16th section was not intended in any way to apply to the 6th section of the same Act; and, therefore, a week's occupation of a house sufficiently rated is ample qualification. And," continued the speaker, "there is not only good law, but common sense in such an interpretation. A distinction should be drawn between the elector and the elected. Our experience has proved that it takes at least twelve months for an elector to understand the great question he is called upon to decide; and even at the expiration of that time he is too often found voting for the most unsuitable candidates. The British ratepayer belongs to one of two classes—he either pays first and grumbles afterwards, or grumbles first and pays afterwards. One class is composed exclusively of the well-to-do, who are made to grumble and then pay; and the other of the poor, who are made to pay, and then grumble. Now we are determined to 'put down' grumbling, and

we are going to do it in this way—we are going to 'put down' rates of every description."

"Gentlemen, I am one with you there. Indeed I may say I'm two with you; but kindly explain your meaning. How do you propose to keep the poor, light the streets, mend the roads, and carry out other necessary public works?"

"I will explain. The Custom House officer doesn't call every quarter for the duty on each separate article consumed by the occupier. *Pater-familias* pays the duty when he purchases the goods. And so it should be with rent. The landlord should be compelled to pay the rates, provide water, gas, and everything about the house, and to charge the tenant a lump sum. And as to the poor, we are determined to 'put down' all expense on that score. We would compel every chapel and church to provide for the poor of its own district. Instead of relieving officers we would appoint district visitors; and instead of clothing blacks in the West Indies we

would oblige our ministers to feed the poor at home! We are determined to 'put down' any further attempt to place national obligations on local shoulders. In 1838 the poor ratepayer had the expense attending the registration of births and deaths imposed upon him; in 1841, vaccination; lunatics in 1844; police, county and borough, in 1856; highways in 1863; education in 1870; and sanitary reform in 1872. It is a positive fact, incredible though the statement may at first appear, that there are about 20,000 bodies having taxing powers in this country, preying upon the poor ratepayer. Now this sort of thing we are not going to stand any longer. We are determined to 'put it down.' All collectors of rates we would primarily 'cut down,' and finally 'put down.' "

"Really, gentlemen," I said, with the modesty for which I am celebrated, "these ideas of yours come upon me so suddenly that I am utterly unable to give any opinion upon them. Besides, my limited knowledge of the facts——"

"No consequence whatever. The Association finds the facts, the members the figures of speech, and the public the money. Like the theatrical manager, when you can't snow white, you must snow brown. Facts that square with the grand cause we have at heart are welcome enough; but facts used by our opponents we are determined in the interests of the poor ratepayer, remorselessly to 'put down.'"

"I have been thinking, gentlemen, what a splendid cry 'Popkins and no rates' would be to go to the parish upon. It's magnificent! What would Taper or Tadpole have given for such a cry? It beats 'Our young Queen and old constitution' into a cocked hat! Why, a popular cry like that ought to carry a man into the church-warden's pew at once. Gentlemen, there is no resisting the fascination of such a cry. I'm your man."

"Perhaps you will kindly allow us to drop one hint. In any speech you may deliver don't fail to allude to the all absorbing, I may say the most

momentous, subject of sewage. We recommend it to every one of our new members for a peroration! You will only be required to make one speech. We attend to all other matters—such as printing, canvassing, cabbing, &c."

I was soon in the midst of an excited election. Mural literature abounded. The opposition society, "The Defence League," called upon the ratepayers to resist tyranny and oppression—to "sound the tocsin, rush to the poll, free themselves from dictation, or be slaves for ever!" People were asked in large capitals, on a white ground, "Who is Popkins?" "What is Popkins?" "Where did Popkins come from?" "Where is Popkins going to?" And the answers given were very far from complimentary.

In the meantime Popkins was preparing himself for the great occasion. "The all absorbing and most momentous subject of sewage" was considered in every possible way—diffusively, homœopathically and otherwise! My three col-

leagues, who had also cast in their lot with the Ratepayers' League, were likewise preparing themselves to pass a Civil Service examination on "the most momentous subject of sewage." According to a squib issued by the "Defence League," one of my colleagues was "a respectable shoemaker of Radical proclivities, who had a *cuir* way of considering any question, parochial or political;" another, a most respectable individual, a well-to-do Conservative butcher, was described as "a Leadenhall slaughterman, a very strange sort of man, with a heavy *stake*, and a deal of kidney, in the parish;" whilst the third, a retired cheesemonger, was "a man who had turned all his milk of human kindness into cheese long since!"

The day of nomination at length arrived. The excitement was tremendous, and so was the minority in which I found myself. A poll was demanded, and the six members of the "Ratepayers' League" worked like horses. Quiet men were dragged from their shops, and old women

from their tea. Halfpennies were liberally given to the small boys to shout for "Popkins and no rates!" And all the mutes not on duty were engaged in letting the public know, in as musical a manner as 3s. 6d. a day would allow, that "Britons never would be slaves."

After the election, I rushed frantically home with the good news. "Proudest day of my life, my dear! Elected for one year by a majority of one! It was well you paid the washing yesterday, for the last vote recorded in my favour was that of Mrs. Twitchett, the laundress!"





No. 2.—THE RESPECTABLE MEMBER.

Twas once remarked by dear old Elia that it was his wont to laugh at funerals and drop “a silent tear” at weddings. Now I am not affected in the same way, or I should soon become a veritable Wagga Wagga nugget, through excessive laughter. “Graves, worms, and epitaphs” may be mirth-provoking subjects in their way; but I shall be pardoned, perhaps, for expressing just a slight preference for orange blossom!

Since my election I have attended so many “dead marches” that mentally I have become, as it were, managing director and grand master of ceremonies to an unlimited monster Necropolis

Company, for putting everybody and everything away on the shortest notice. Let me not be misunderstood. Like the brave general at Waterloo, who witnessed the burial of his leg with much “pomp and circumstance,” I have also seen men buried by inches. Indeed I am sadly afraid it is so with all of us. I allude not to the corporeal hereditament, but to the incorporeal—that which once severed from a man is too often lost for ever, without hope of resurrection.

During my experience as a “silent member,” I have been astounded at the readiness with which gentlemen follow to the grave attributes and qualities which are the glory and the power of public life. “The plumes of ostrich and scutcheons blazoned round” are daily called into requisition. Tact, moderation, temper, singleness of purpose, self-respect, independence, and other qualities which give power and grandeur to a public career —how soon they leave us if not jealously watched !

There is, however, one member of our Vestry

who has never yet, to my knowledge, got up a funeral procession on his own account. Without doubt, he is a true leader of men. He leads without seeming to lead. While appearing to give way he actually concedes nothing. He conciliates everybody without sacrificing principles. Whilst other men, who are deficient in tact, are heard to declaim that to accomplish their end they will "spend their last shilling, wear out their last shoe, shed their last drop of blood, and tear the last hair out of their head," he quietly accomplishes his end by half-a-dozen judicious words. He is a master of tact. "Tact," says a well-known author, "is an intuitive art of manner, which carries us through a difficulty better than talent or knowledge. Talent is power; tact is skill. Talent is weight; tact is momentum. Talent knows what to do; tact knows how to do it. Talent makes a man respectable; tact makes him respected. Talent is wealth; tact is ready money."

The "Respectable Member" rules by the sheer force of character—the greatest and noblest power

under the sun ! Now all the members of our Vestry are respectable—*cela va sans dire*. But there is something more than respectable in our friend. He is intensely respectable. Whilst the respectability of other members is merged into their general character, our friend's respectability stands upon its dignity, and refuses to mix itself up with any other attribute. Whilst some are called to mind for their eloquence, powers of sarcasm, independence, ability, flow of language ; and others are known by the cut of their coats, the length of their hair, the squareness of their boots, or their manner of carrying an umbrella—the Respectable Member impresses you with no habit or quality in particular. To use Vestry language, I should say that his mind is like a forty-feet road from end to end.

In one respect my friend is a genuine democrat, for equality runs through his whole being. He is not rich in one essential and poor in another. His ability, education, powers of speech, capacity for work, social status, personal appearance—all are

alike respectable. There is no lagging behind of any particular quality. The invisible policeman has all the "parts" well in hand, and all are made to "move on" together at one and the same pace. Emerson has somewhere said that "every institution is to be regarded as the lengthened shadow of some great man." My friend is an institution in our Vestry, and his shadow is the reign of common sense.

We are now fast realising the fact that it is possible to conduct public business without private pique. Personality is not now considered an absolute essential in our debates. Hard words and hard knocks are fast going out of fashion. Coarse-minded men—hard, stern, uncompromising men, who blurt out reckless insinuations, and what they stupidly call "truths"—are going out of fashion also. Sarcasm, which was at one time cheered to the echo, now falls dead upon the ear; and the member

"Who, for the poor renown of being smart,
Would leave a sting within a brother's heart,"

is made, however reluctantly, to acknowledge the reign of common sense.

And this gift of common sense, how potent—I had almost said omnipotent—it is in all the affairs of life ! Intellect is all very well in its way ; but common sense, tact, and temper are known to exercise an amount of influence far exceeding that to be gained by intellectual endowments. Good sense, disciplined by experience, and guided by wisdom, consists chiefly in that temper of mind which enables its possessor to deal with the practical affairs of life with justice, judgment, discretion, and charity. Hence men of culture and experience are invariably found the most forbearing and tolerant, and ignorant and narrow-minded persons the most unforgiving and intolerant.

The “Respectable Member”—or as he might also be termed, the common-sense member—appears to act by means of some latent power, some reserved force, which acts secretly by its mere presence. In the outside world he would

be a powerful antagonist of the “ Baals of the world, the sham captains, solemn human shams, phantasies, supreme quacks, dead sea-apes, and dull and dreary humbugs,” as Carlyle has it.

In the little world wherein his influence is exercised, the “Respectable Member” is all-powerful for good. His absence from Vestry meetings is always subject for regret ; whilst his presence is a sure check upon “hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness.” The life of the “Respectable Member” is made up of good deeds and kind words. All bickerings and quarrelings, all asperities of manner, all angularities are smoothed down in his presence. If our young members wish to trace the true source of power, let them study the character of the “Respectable Member.” Should they not be promoted to a “beakship,” as happened to the “Respectable Member,” whose character I have faintly endeavoured to sketch, they may yet be useful in their day and generation.



No. 3.—THE CANTANKEROUS MEMBER.

PEOPLES of the human species, according to a well-known writer, is composed of two distinct races—the men who borrow and the men who lend. In one or other of these primary distinctions are to be found, we are told, all the races of mankind—“the Parthians, Medes, and Elamites; Gothic and Celtic tribes; black men, white men, and red men.”

And so with our Vestry. It may be divided into two distinct classes—the cantankerous member and the members who are not cantankerous. The former class consists of one member, who alone represents one hemisphere of Vestry life. In that one hemisphere are to be found all the

beauties and the virtues of creation. In the other all the thorns, and weeds, and stones, and sand, and everlasting mud !

The "Cantankerous Member" is superior to all human foibles. He looks from a lofty pedestal upon the follies, rivalries, and contentions going on around him. His whole course of conduct is an everlasting pæan that he is not like other men. His honesty—which no one can question—is continually being thrust upon our attention. We are constantly invited to inspect the pass-book, to take note of the large balance of honesty which he keeps at the bankers. Other members timidly fancy they are honest. He knows that he is. When the virtues were being distributed everybody else was hiding behind the door, and the "Cantankerous Member" came in for the entire lot ! In vain do the virtues of others plead, like angels, trumpet-tongued. "Virtue in others, to him, doth vice appear." He rejoices to stand alone. He is his own party—his own platform. Gregariousness

of any kind he utterly abhors. Nothing would delight him more than to play All-England, single-handed; for, though the runs might be against him, the consciousness of having striven against tremendous odds would be ample compensation. He has no fixed principles, and so allows his course to be determined by surrounding circumstances. It matters not what he opposes, or what he supports, so long as he can run counter to general opinion. That which in others would be called "pluck," in the "Cantankerous Member" degenerates into "pigheadedness." He has never read, or never caught the spirit of the French proverb, *Il faut reculer pour mieux sauter*—by conceding nothing, he loses all. He is a true disciple of Ruskin, who holds that "everyone in the State, from the King's son downward, should do something thoroughly."

The "Cantankerous Member" thoroughly succeeds in making himself disagreeable. Although "cantankerous," he is not spiteful, and, even when most disagreeable, he is not vindictive. We are

all beginning to understand—shall I say to like—him? Privately, he is one of the best-hearted fellows imaginable—a man of considerable *bon-homie*. His “quips and cranks, and wanton wiles,” are only the result of youthful jest and jollity. He is a middle-aged boy. He enjoys with as keen a relish as ever, that inevitable “dig in the ribs” which *Punch* is made to administer to *Judy*. It is not so with all of us. I can distinctly remember the time when “brandy-balls” ceased to be “brandy-balls;” when “mivies” lost their mysterious fascination; and when I no longer felt a grim delight in seeing one boy punch another boy’s head. As I regard my *now*, compared with my *then*, I flatter myself, let me hope not unduly, that I am at present a more respectable member of society.

The *now* of the “Cantankerous Member,” on the contrary, is just the same as his *then*. Nothing delights him more than to get up a fight, and to see a general “punching of heads” going on all round. Like the youngster in the

fairy tale, he throws stones, first at one giant and then at another, until at last he has the extreme satisfaction of witnessing a magnificent row between the two. Such boyish tricks, whilst intensely amusing, can hardly be said to add much to the dignity of life. And yet, on the other hand, it is at times highly inconvenient to be compelled to acknowledge the advance of years—to see the freshness of youth disappearing along the corridors of time ; to have decided views of men and things ; to form strong opinions; to belong to a party ; to be lost in a crowd ; and to have one's identity swamped, as it were, in a sea of opinion.

The “Cantankerous Member” runs no such risk. Like the great professor of bear’s-grease, he will either be Cæsar or nobody ! He is always to the fore. If the Vestry foolishly attempts to prove that two and two make four, my friend, with a Lowe-like capacity, instantly springs to his feet to prove that two and two make five. If the decision be against him, he

forthwith calls in question the ruling of the chairman, and demands a division thereon. He follows no leader, mixes with no party, and acknowledges no authority superior to himself. When Horne Tooke was on his trial before Lord Kenyon, he told his lordship that there were only two parties in the cause—himself and the jury. The Judge and the Crier of the Court attended in their respective places. And so with the “Cantankerous Member;” he only acknowledges two parties—himself and the public. The Vestry and the Beadle attend in their respective places.

“ He’s a straight spoken kind of creetur,
That blurts right out wot’s in his head,
And ef he’s one pecooler featur’,
It is a nose that won’t be led.”

Such is the “Cantankerous Member.” Like snow in winter, which permeates the ground; the hail in spring, which cuts off superfluous blossom; the summer lightning, which clears the atmosphere; and the “candid friend,” who tells us what we really are, the “Cantankerous Mem-

ber" is useful, if not agreeable. Were it not for his presence, we should at times, I fear, sink into a dull level of monotony—into a stagnant pool of unanimity! Indeed, if he were only to be not quite so good, not quite so honest, not quite so conscientious ; if he would soften down that hard, painful, unbending matter-of-factness of his ; if he would only exercise a little more of that charity which "hopeth all things ;" and have a little more regard for the opinions of those who unfortunately differ from him, he would be, without doubt, one of the most useful members of the Vestry.

It is not well, after all, to be perpetually reminding people that you, at least, act purely from conscientious motives! There are some people in the world who can do nothing, except upon strictly conscientious motives. They rise at a certain time, dine at a certain time, pick their teeth at a certain time—and all upon conscientious principles. George Herbert has told us that the consciousness of duty performed gives

us "music at midnight." What kind of music meets the ear of the "Cantankerous Member," whose "consciousness of duty performed" must be something alarming, I cannot pretend to divine. Seeing that "honesty," "conscientiousness," "sense of duty," and such-like phrases are for ever being hurled at us, I should imagine that my friend's midnight slumbers must be attended with a full musical accompaniment—something like a cross between the waits in a state of beer, and the bagpipes short of wind.

And yet I should regret the absence of the "Cantankerous Member." In spite of his peculiarities, we are all proud of him; but I fancy we should respect him just a little more if he were not quite so "cantankerous."





No. 4.—THE WORDY MEMBER.

WE are told by Jean Paul that there never was a nature without its vein of romance; that the most realistic and commonplace people have their moods of romance, and that the cord, however little we may expect it, runs through the woof of all humanity. Now it is evident enough that Jean Paul never encountered the "Wordy Member" in his walks through life. That "honourable gentleman"—a term invariably applied by my friend to his fellow members—is the very antipodes of romance, the "most unrizzest piece of dough that ever was." It is natural enough that it should be so. Nature is very thoughtful, not only in the balancing of sexes, but in apportioning gifts. Our ugly women (or

perhaps it would be safer to say the ugly women of other countries) are proverbially clever, and our pretty dolls are proverbially—well, I will not say what.

The “Wordy Member” was born in a state of nudity as regards sentiment, but with a full wardrobe of words. Instead of a silver spoon in his mouth, he entered life with an enlarged edition of “Dr. Johnson” on the brain. And from his youth up, even until now, he has always been prodigal of his inheritance. There has been no hoarding up for another generation. He distributes *largesses* like a Prince. His vast treasures are patent to all the world. He keeps open house. There is no imagining him to be a Rothschild—we all know him to be fabulously rich—in words.

When Daniel Lambert died, we are told that his waistcoat was cut up in order to supply a charity-school of 200 boys with “inexpressibles.” Should the “Wordy Member” ever cross the “Stygian Gulf,” he will leave behind him words

enough to start 200 new languages ; for though, according to Max Müller, there are already about 900 languages and dialects in existence, we could no doubt find room for 200 more !

I often think what a godsend my worthy friend would have been to poor old Adam, when “every beast of the field and every fowl of the air” put in an appearance before him to see what he could call them ! What a hard time the poor fellow must have had of it ! According to tradition, he found little difficulty in naming men, as when he became tired, a decree was issued that all the rest should be called Smith.

This theory of naming men and things is rather at variance, I know, with certain great authorities. For instance, Locke started a theory which has been powerfully advocated by Adam Smith, and adopted by Dugald Stewart, that man lived for a time in a state of mutism, his only means of communication consisting in gestures of the body, and in the changes of countenance. There is no doubt much to be said in favour of such a theory.

When a small boy puts his "thumb unto his nose and spreads his fingers out," the force of expression reaches its climax. Words are comparatively "nowhere" in such a case. To return, however, to my immediate subject.

The "Wordy Member" is not a man of ideas, and it would really be expecting too much to look for them in such a quarter. But he has that which few of us can boast of—a complete harem of adjectives!—not rosy, chubby, plump little beauties, but all of the long and lean kind. Pope tells us that

"Words are like leaves ; and where they most abound,
Much fruit of sense beneath is rarely found ;"

and if Shakespeare is to be believed, I am afraid that most of my friend's children are doing penance in a most uncomfortable place, for the "bard of Avon" assures us that

"Words, without thought, never to heaven go."

The "Wordy Member," although he has spoken oftener and longer than any other member of our Vestry, has never yet, to my knowledge, given us

“one profound maxim, one solid observation, one forcible description, one beautiful thought, one humorous picture, one happy illustration, one pithy remark.” His similes are either repetitions of the same idea, or so obvious and general as not to lend any additional force to it, as when a huntress is compared to Diana, or a warrior rushing into battle is likened to a lion rushing on his prey. His mind can only be compared to a Parliamentary train composed exclusively of third-class carriages which stops at all stations. His measured speeches, interminable sentences, gradual intonations, forcible-feeble style, and self-conscious gratification, are matters for ceaseless astonishment. His satisfaction with himself is a sight for the gods! He believes implicitly in two things—himself and the Constitution. Like the *Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, who talked prose without knowing it, the “Wordy Member” talks nonsense with equal innocence—

“ He gives it all out with the air of a chap
Who thinks to himself, 'Tis prodigious fine tap.”

All his words wear the garb funereal and solemn air. They introduce themselves to notice by a grave and gradual bow.

By no chance whatever does even one little winsome creature come tripping and romping along. When a stray idea manages to put in an appearance, it is immediately seized by a whole host of the long winded and long faced fraternity, and so dressed and padded with endless coats and coverings that the poor little thing, when it does appear, is not recognised by his best friends !

Even the paradise of little children (the nursery) is now to be presided over by wind-bags. All the nursery rhymes are to be called in for revision. Here is one selected from a beautifully bound copy of a beautifully proper book :—

“ Master John Horner,
Situated in the corner,
Masticating a Christmas pie,
Introduced his thumb,
And, extracting a plum,
Ejaculated, ‘What a promising youth am I ! ’ ”

It was once my duty to attend a Conference on

Education, in which the “Wordy Member” played a principal part. We were told that education was a very good thing, and that ignorance was a very bad thing; that truth, liberty, and virtue were essential to the well-being of the commonwealth; and that corruption and slavery were drags on the wheels of prosperity!

All this is no doubt very true and very good, and well do I remember how it reminded me at the time of the celebrated “summing-up” of Mr. Justice Stareleigh, who told the jury that “if they attached any credence to the evidence of Mrs. Cluppins—why, they would believe it; and if they didn’t—why, they wouldn’t.”

Now there could be no possible objection to all this commonplace twaddle, to this dreadful “marking,” or rather murdering of time—to this incessant uttering of truisms, if the Vestry were a debating club, instead of a body of business men deputed to do real and substantial work. Our one “Wordy Member” is a terrible hindrance to business. He has always got something to say at

the wrong time, and invariably says it in a wrong way. Although, as I have already remarked, he has an ample wardrobe of words, he always reminds me of the man who puts on a dress-coat over a friendly chop, or else puts in an appearance at a *bal masqué* the day after the fair !

We have several members of exceptional ability amongst us, but the "Wordy Member," by some freak of fortune, is generally elected on any deputation that is going ; and as, on such occasions, he is not, like myself, a "Silent Member," he always rushes to the fore, and impresses outsiders with the fact that "Our Vestry" is composed of a very long-winded race of individuals. As D'Arcy Thompson has it, he is a veritable tub-roller—like Diogenes, who, to amuse his fellow-citizens, used to roll his tub up and down the market-place.

My friend is never so happy as when engaged in imitating, in this respect at any rate, the poor, old, ill-natured cynic. The bigger the tub, and the greater the noise, the better pleased is the

“Wordy Member.” He cares nothing for results, so long as he can make a noise and roll a big, empty tub about to his heart’s content!

When suffering at times under a special visitation of tub-rolling, the whole Vestry presents the same appearance as Curran’s Irish Lord Chancellor on the defeat of the Ministry—they look “perfectly resigned ;” and many a silent prayer is offered up that the ratepayers would in their wisdom promote the “Wordy Member” to the House of Lords of parochial life, and make a Guardian of him. As in the case of a book which once had a good run—“The Modern Men of Letters—except G. A. S.,” I am quite sure that an edition of “Our Vestry”—except the “Wordy Member”—would be equally welcome amongst us.





No. 5.—THE ECONOMICAL MEMBER.

IO begin with a paradox, the “Economical Member” is not economical! Unlike the famous Governor of St. Helena, satirised by Tom Moore,

“Sir Hudson Lowe, Sir Hudson Lowe,
By name and, ah! by nature so!”

the “Economical Member” is only so by name. His proper name should be the “Cutting-Down Member,” since he is “down” upon every kind of expense. He regards cost of any kind, whether of time, labour, or money, as an absolute evil. He has very little faith in the “slow shilling,” and none whatever in the “nimble ninepence.” A “current account” is only a

dangerous stream that goes to swell the sea of perdition ; whilst a large “deposit account,” represented by four figures in a pass-book, which stands upon its dignity, and refuses to be “turned over,” is worshipped as the god of safety.

The “Economical Member” lives only in the present. If he believes at all in the future, it is in a cold, cruel, unproductive future—a many-headed monster, who seizes all you give him, and gives you nothing in return. He has no faith that

“ The bread comes back in many days,
And buttered, too, fer sartin.”

He laughs to scorn the idea that one morsel of the bread will ever come back, let alone the butter ! “ Hold fast” is the dog of his fancy. He is a true disciple of economy according to Curran. That brilliant wit inherited nothing from his father but a deal of good advice, which precious commodity was so prized and economised by the son, that he declared he never used an atom of it. “ The penny soul,” we are told,

“never came to twopence.” My friend’s soul will never reach three-halfpence! The “Economical Member” would rather give a penny for a reputation that would only last a day, than twopence for a name that would last out all time. Unlike Bidder, he is the “wonderful boy who does *not* calculate.”

It will naturally be asked, after this description of the “Economical Member,” how it came to pass that my worthy friend and economy became linked together? I know not. It’s one of those things that “no fellah can understand.” It is one of those liberties which men take, because no other word presents itself to describe more forcibly a certain phase of opinion. The men that carp at pennies and let pounds pass by unchallenged; who take limited views of easy financial questions; who are unable to see an inch before their nose—such men can never be economical, in the true acceptation of the term. They mean well. I will go so far as to say they begin well, but an everlasting nursing of one idea

cramps the mind and warps the understanding. Insanity, by slow and insidious steps, steals upon the man of one idea. Every question is regarded from one point of view. The pet idea becomes at length of such gigantic proportions that all else is dwarfed beside it.

A learned gentleman once gave it as his opinion that all men were, more or less, mad.

“What,” said the learned Judge, “do you mean to say, sir, that I am mad?”

“If your lordship will grant me five minutes’ conversation I will tell you,” was the ready reply.

I have great faith in this theory of universal madness. With some of us it is a mere passing cloud, a brief attack, a fever fit, a shock which dies away; with others a permanent mania which defies cure. Mrs. Prodgers was mad upon cab-fares, Mr. Whalley on the Claimant, Mr. New-degate on Popery, Dr. Cumming on prophecy, Mr. Babbage on barrel organs, Sir Peter Laurie on suicide, and the “Economical Member”

is as mad as a March hare on “economy.”
With him—

“ Cost is a monster of such hideous mien,
That to be hated, 'tis to be seen.”

The “Economical Member” entered the Vestry with the cry of “low estimates, low salaries, and low rates,” and, thanks to his energetic advocacy, we are now threatened with a serious epidemic—low fever. Parochial refreshments—a miserable return, it is true, for services rendered—are now a thing of the past. Business, somehow or other, has fallen into arrear, and more paid labour is called for, to do the work formerly performed by voluntary aid.

“ But the friend of economy,
He contends, he,
That this means low rates, and so therefore ought we.”

The “Economical Member” would, no doubt, thoroughly have deserved his title, if this one idea of economy had not been allowed to take entire possession of his mind. He has been

flattered by his friends into a false position. "Another Hume has come to judgment!" they cry, and forthwith a foolish attempt is made to out-Hume Hume. It is now *perdrix, toujours perdrix*—economy, always economy; economy without reason; economy without faith; economy without sense; at all times, and in all seasons economy at any price!

It will easily be understood from this description of the "Economical Member," that his peculiar notions on the "fitness of things" often bring the Vestry into disrepute with outsiders, who are only too eager to seize upon the little follies of little men, and overlook the broader views of the educated men amongst us. These outside critics place our little foibles in one scale and the good accomplished in the other, and, by one satiric kick, send the good, with fearful impetus, to the ceiling. The clever author of "Contrasts" (a representative outside critic) has assured the public that whilst Vestries swallow Metropolitan Board precepts, amounting to many thousands,

with the utmost ease, the cost of providing the beadle's coat with buttons forms a strong subject of debate. We have to thank our "Economical Member" for this satiric touch. And yet something may be urged on behalf of the buttons, seeing that when the precept is once issued, payment is made compulsory, whilst the buttons represent an item which may be avoided. Rome was once saved—or, rather, we are told so—by the cackling of geese ; and so our "Economical Member" is at times most useful. He is a great authority on the cost of materials. No one knows better the relative values of hard-core and soft-core ; and although no member is known to place a higher value upon rubbish, we can always take a discount off such calculations, and place it to the credit of "honest merit," which my friend values at a nominal figure.

The grand field-day of the "Economical Member" takes place when a paid officer has the audacity to ask for an increase of salary. He always reminds me on such occasions of the old

woman whose eyes instinctively turned heavenwards whenever the plate came round! I once possessed a little dog which would rest quietly on its hinder quarters, balancing a nice little *bonne bouche* on its nose, for any length of time, until the talismanic words "Paid for" were uttered, when the little pet instantly "bolted" the precious morsel, and rushed about the room in a frantic state of excitement. The mere mention of the words "increase of salary" sends the "Economical Member" into the same excited state. Well do I remember an occasion on which an old and respected servant of the Vestry applied for an increase of salary, after an honest service of twenty-five years. "Economy" was equal to the occasion, and so were my friend's powers of logic.

"If," said the "Economical Member," "the applicant were worth so much when in the prime of life, when his faculties were fully developed, when his usefulness was at its height, on what grounds can an advance of salary now be called,

when it is confessed that the applicant is falling into the 'sere and yellow leaf?' If he is not satisfied with his salary, we can find plenty of men to do the work at half the price."

Such is the stock argument of all economical members. Character, long service, extended usefulness, enlarged experience, the wisdom and honour of old age, are nothing worth. The past is forgotten, the future is ignored, and the present is abused. This doctrine of finding other people to do the work at half the price, though absolutely true, is manifestly unfair. It is capable, of course, of universal application—to every business, profession, or position. It can be applied to the "Economical Member" himself, as well as to the Queen on the throne and to Marwood on the gallows. It is owing to the preaching of such peculiarly "economical" doctrines that my friend's usefulness is impaired. It is not true economy that we are called upon to admire, but a poor, miserable, pinchbeck imitation, which has none of the ring of the true metal about it. It is the

shell without the kernel, the outward form without the governing spirit, the shadow without the substance. It is anything and everything but one thing—it is not “economy.”





No. 6.—THE ABUSIVE MEMBER.

THE Abusive Member is fortunately not very often met with in public life now-a-days. Modern journalism—metropolitan, provincial, and local—has done much to tone down his hard-mouthing utterances, and to teach him that mere vulgar abuse will no longer be permitted to degrade the principle of local self-government. Occasions will, of course, arise in public life when strong language is imperatively needed, and when plain blunt words—words “stript of their shirts,” as an old poet has it, may, nay, must be used; but the case is very different when not principles but individuals are

attacked, and when the man is always ready on the shortest notice to

“Unpack his heart in words,
And fall a-cursing like a very drab,
A scullion.”

We all know what crimes have been committed in the name of Liberty, and past experience has set forth in an equal degree how a display of personal pique or private spite may be indulged in under “a strict sense of duty.” “I am here, gentlemen,” this Abusive Member has oft been heard to declare, “to do my duty fearlessly and independently, and my constituents applaud me for thus acting.” The reference to his constituents is rather forced, seeing that they are so utterly indifferent to the honourable member’s utterances that he is generally returned by about as many of them as can be counted on his fingers and thumbs. Were his constituents to interest themselves in the slightest degree in his public career there can be no doubt of the position he would inevitably occupy on the poll, for unlike

the famous Alderman Sawbridge no one will be bold enough to declare that the Abusive Member represents either the language or sentiments of his constituents. When that worthy Alderman presented a petition from Billingsgate and accompanied it with much vituperation of the Minister, Lord North began his reply, "I will not deny that the worthy Alderman speaks the sentiments, nay the very language of his constituents." The Abusive Member only represents himself, and that is a constituency which thoroughly supports him in his abusive mission :

" My name's Johnny Grub ; I'm a vendor of scandal ;
My tongue like an auctioneer's hammer I handle,
Knocking down reputations by one inch of candle."

The Abusive Member makes use of his position to make statements which he would not dare to utter in his private capacity. His great *forte* is to attack officers who are absent, and who have no opportunities of reply—a proceeding which can hardly be termed either dignified or becoming, but is eminently characteristic of the man.

But the merest insect has its sting; and at some time or other the opportunity of using it, and the men who wantonly seek to wound the feelings of others, whom they deem incapable of replying to their malignity, in the blindness of their insolence tread sometimes on a scorpion instead of a worm, and receive a sting when they only anticipated the pleasure of seeing a victim writhe; and this has happened to the Abusive Member.

It may be stated, without fear of contradiction, that the whole conduct of the Abusive Member is absolutely without one redeeming feature.

“No sense of humour dropped its oil
On the hard ways his purpose went.”

Lord Castlereagh, we are told, carried ten points by his good humour, courtesy, and personal influence to every one that he carried by his logic. The Abusive Member has no personal influence whatever, and he is utterly incapable of carrying one point by logic or any other means. He has been found out. His motives have been gauged, and he stands before the world a mere thing, of

no soul, capacity, or feeling—a mere mechanical utterer of jerky spite and most objectionable rant! One can understand real intellectual blows, logical hard hitting, the stern cut and thrust of mind! These are the amenities, one had almost said the delights of public life, and individuals who engage in them soon learn to respect, even to reverence one another. But nothing but public scorn can attend the man who cowardly seizes every opportunity of wounding the feelings of absent individuals, and who in abuse is

“Brisk as a flea and ignorant as dirt.”

We conclude, as we commenced, with expressing a well grounded belief that such a character as we have faintly sketched is but rarely met with now ; but he is found occasionally in our governing bodies, and when unearthed he cannot be too severely treated. He is an excrescence on the body politic, an ulcer of a most unclean kind, a thing to be despised, an object to be loathed, for all time.



No. 7.—THE INDIGNANT MEMBER.

IH E Indignant Member must have been born in a state of utter indignation. That interesting event having been brought off *malgré lui*, he has been indignant with some one or other or some thing or other, ever since. His christening mug, his pap, his first frock, his first pair of "inexpressibles," his toys, his schoolfellows—his everything almost from his toothless days even until now, have in turn come in for an abundant share of indignation. It would be tedious to narrate in detail all the occasions on which his indignation has spent its force ; nor is it necessary, for it is after all a case of indignation all round. It may be mentioned,

however, that in addition to the public occasions on which the Indignant Member displays his indignation, he may be said to carry his peculiar characteristic into all the common affairs of common life. He has been known to sneeze brimstone and spit fire and look daggers, when eating a chop; and to cough rattlesnakes and scorpions over a parochial junketing! He greatly affects the corners of streets, especially streets which rejoice in red sticks of sealing-wax known as pillar-boxes; and he has been known to stand so long against the wax, pouring forth his indignation against everybody and everything, that on one occasion, through excessive warmth of body and temper, he became sealed to the pillar most completely.

He is a grand talker, and if you listen not to his flow of volubility he is indignant; and yet more indignant if you interrupt him. No one can lay down the law in such a dogmatic style. Although we fancy it must be conceded that there is such a thing as statute law, you are positively

compelled to receive his law as something altogether superior to it! Statute law isn't in it, when he is in the way; for he talks of chapters and sections and subsections with so much volatility, that you "come down" instanter. If you do not, his indignation soon gets up, and you are denounced as one altogether incapable of understanding an Act of Parliament. And not only does he give us our law, but he is our thinking machine. Full to overflowing of the most intense and ever active mental vigour himself, the Indignant Member is indignant at any display of mental power in others. He evidently thinks it quite unnecessary whilst we have him with us, that we should in any way give ourselves the trouble of thinking. On one occasion, amongst many others, a poor crushed, timid clerk, who was eventually frightened into resigning his position, was being lectured for doing something which he ought not to have done, or for not doing something which he ought to have done. The poor fellow in explanation had—will it be believed?—the boldness,

even the impertinence, to say in vindication of himself, that "he thought so and so." The Indignant Member was so frightfully indignant at such an act of insubordination that he gave the committee table a most terrific blow with his clenched fist and exclaimed, "But you mustn't think ! It's not for you to think, sir. We (that is, his colleagues and himself,) we think, sir!" The clerk mildly replied, "But I can't help thinking," and then gaining courage, the poor fellow had the daring to say, "and what is more I will think, in spite of you or anybody else." It is needless to say that that clerk's official coffin was ordered at once ; and very properly so, too, for if officials once give themselves up to thinking, the work on which they are daily engaged would soon come to grief. The night cab-horse described by Dickens went all right so long as it was not taken out of the shafts. When after forty-two years it was one day removed, the poor animal dropped down dead. Let the clerk, then, by all means, keep to the official shafts, and plod daily without desiring

to exercise either thought or liberty of action, or the poor cab-horse's fate will assuredly be his.

But in order to see our friend at his best, you should watch him when "in vestry assembled." There you have indignation intensified, and heat made red-hot, very much red-hot. With what terrible warmth he hurls defiance long and threats severe at the heads of the General Purposes! How he takes the skin off the very bodies of the "Finance" Committee! How he scoops out the very marrow from official bones, and makes the Vestry Clerk's face look half a dozen colours at once. When in his most majestic fury of indignation, he gnashes his teeth in a most decided manner, and shoots forth looks which express the quintessence of fire and fury. As he rushes first at one and then at another, you are lost in wonder who is next to be the object of his attack. The oft-quoted bull in the china shop is a mild-mannered gentleman compared to the Indignant Member when in fine form. Boswell, writing of Wilberforce in 1784, says, "I saw what seemed a mere shrimp mount

upon the table, but as I listened, he grew and grew until the shrimp became a whale." And so with the Indignant Member. Though short of stature, and certainly not gifted with many outward graces, he soon convinces the listener that he is a giant in mental inches. The "froth and fury" of the Indignant Member is evidently conceived with a view to effect. Carried out with a little more tact and temper it might possibly succeed in influencing opinion in favour of the cause sought to be advanced; whereas now it simply damages any cause to which the Indignant Member lends the favour of his eloquence. Warmth in moderation, warmth turned on occasionally, a natural warmth which is convincing and not personal, logical and not denunciatory, and well under the control of the speaker, is most persuasive and convincing; but indiscriminate fury is a waste of power, a purposeless and aimless thing, a bag of wind which, when pricked, is at once rendered harmless and useless. And yet, as already stated, the gunpowder of a little anger is

not a bad way to make the bullet reach its billet.

Luther used to say, "If I wish to compose or write or pray or preach well, I must be angry. Then all the blood in my veins is stirred, my understanding is sharpened, and all my dismal thoughts and temptations are dissipated." But the Indignant Member, instead of reserving himself and his powers for exceptional efforts, is always indignant, as much over the expediency of oiling the parish pump as he would be over the most abstruse imperial question. This warmth is begot of spontaneous combustion. Some of us sail gradually from a calm sea into stormy weather, but our friend has the faculty of getting into a gale at once. He puts all his thunder into the opening sentences, and sometimes, through an over straining of his great mental faculties, or from over excitement, or from physical prostration, his speeches taper into mildness as they proceed, and in some cases resemble that road described by Emerson which opened grandly be-

tween avenues of branching pine, but which narrowed gradually as it proceeded, until at last, it ended in a squirrel track and ran up a tree!

But our friend is most indignant of all when anyone has the boldness to differ from him on matters political. At the slightest breath of opposition to his extreme political opinions, the Indignant Member becomes unbearable; and the poor wretch who has the misfortune to differ from him is ordered out for instant execution. He would make a splendid Autocrat of All the Russias, for he would put down all opposition to his ideas with a strong hand.

But in spite of all his indignant utterings, our warm member is privately one of the most quiet, inoffensive, tender-hearted beings in creation. Open-handed and liberal to a fault, with a heart as large as a bullock's, as the Australians have it, and a helping hand at all times for a fallen brother, the Indignant Member is privately the antipodes of the character he acts in public. It was said of O'Connell, that his mind consisted of two compart-

ments—the one inhabited by the purest angels, and the other by the vilest demons, and that the occupation of his life was to transfer his friends from one compartment to another. So it is with the Indignant Member. His friends sometimes find his conduct mysterious and altogether unaccountable, when this transfer business is taking place ; but he has never been known to keep his friends long amongst the demons—indeed it is generally understood that he only puts them there out of pure fun or mischief. He never means any harm, but still, to say the least of it, it is not appreciated by those operated upon.

In conclusion it may be stated that whilst few men have more private friends, no public man of any ability has so few supporters as the Indignant Member. An impression has got abroad that he runs amuck at anybody or anything for the purpose of displaying his marvellous powers of eloquence ; that his rage is often simulated and his thunder feigned, and that in order to gratify a passing whim, he will try to ride roughshod over

the opinions and feelings of others. If there is any foundation for this belief, it will account for the small amount of real power possessed by the Indignant Member.





No. 8.—THE NEW MEMBER.

THE experiences of a new member, how very varied and novel; and how numerous the phases of character they present! The peculiarities to be found amongst new members would fill volumes, and so we must modestly be content with one type of character.—the new and nervous fledgling. On taking his seat for the first time he feels like a new boy suddenly shot down amongst a school of giants, and one of his first efforts is to ascertain the name of the head boy, in order that he may propitiate that worthy with kind words and graceful compliments. Unless this is done the New Member is haunted with an old boyish fear that sooner or later his head will inevitably find its way “into

chancery" or be punched off-hand at the shortest provocation. He will next take stock of the members with whom his lot has now been cast, in the hope of finding other props of support in any future season of difficulty. Having progressed thus far, the new member is soon found bold enough to indulge in an occasional "hear, hear," but this is generally done at first in the wrong place and in a tone of voice which attracts immediate and unpleasant attention. Whilst lacking courage to assume a perpendicular attitude himself he is lost in wonder at the ease with which member after member delivers himself with more or less freedom of expression. He sees that it is possible for members to rise without seeing the floor of the room rise with them. One day, when the chairman fortunately caught the eye of another member, he actually summoned up courage to rise a few inches from his seat, but not without witnessing the seat rise too, followed by the chairs which performed a pirouette to his utter bewilderment. He distinctly counted six chairmen and

about three times the usual number of members, and when his sitting position was resumed he felt the seat give way, until it seemed to lodge him in the cellar beneath.

But the new member should take “heart of grace,” for he has no doubt read how even the great Earl Beaconsfield failed conspicuously when addressing the House of Commons as Mr. Disraeli. He should think of Curran, who tells us that when first addressing “his gentlemen” in a little tavern room he was frightened at the sound of his own voice; how Sheridan’s first essay failed, and how Addison, after he had three times commenced with “I conceive,” was cruelly told that as he had conceived three times and brought forth nothing, he had better make way for some one else who might have a better chance of success!

A first failure is often a grand help to a new member, if he has any of the true metal in his composition. A failure often gives a man modesty of character—charity for others’ failings—a quiet

determination to overcome difficulties ; it brings out inherent power ; it teaches patience and enforces study ; it makes a man know himself and gives him the power to analyze and gauge his capacities, and above all it effectually checks the flippant and careless style which is too often associated with instant success.

Of course there are public men who never recover from a first failure. "My Lords," said the Earl of Rochester on a certain occasion, "I—I—I—I rise this time, my lords ; I—I—I divide my discourse into four *branches*." Here he came to a halt, and then added, "My Lords, if ever I rise again in this House, I give you leave to cut me off *root and branch* for ever!"

We are reminded of the failure of a new member who essayed once or twice to make a speech but without success. At his second attempt, although unable to speak on the subject under discussion, he was able after a few minutes of agonizing blank despair to speak as follows :—"Gentlemen,

I declare to Heaven that if I had an enemy upon whose head I would invoke the most cruel torture, I could wish him no other fate than to stand where I stand now." Such a position is not by any means a novelty in public life, and the man who has never attempted to address "a sea of upturned faces" for the first time, can form but a faint idea of the ordeal. He may have committed his speech to memory; may have recited it before the glass, given the cabbages in his garden the full benefit of it, and may have impressed his domestics by his wild utterances that he was qualifying for Hanwell; he may have delivered it the last thing before leaving home between putting on his boots and his hat, but no sooner does he come into the presence of reality and see before him experienced and critical men, than his courage fails, his memory takes unto itself wings, and he stands erect bereft of the power of speech—a spectacle fit only for the gods to laugh at.

But if ultimate success is the object to be gained

new members should, before attempting to express their opinions, endeavour to acclimatise themselves. "The magic of patience" will bring its own reward in due season. Ambitious oratory should always be avoided, and speeches to be listened to and appreciated should have small beginnings and progressive stature. I have, whilst sitting as a "silent member," seen reputation after reputation made in this way—by quiet plodding and by gradually consolidating the positions gained from time to time. The successful speaker deals rather in facts than fancies ; in figures of arithmetic rather than in figures of speech ; in pounds, shillings, and pence rather than in "high falutin," and when success is once assured and the goal of success reached, he may take flights which would have made him perfectly dizzy in his younger days. The rungs of the ladder may be difficult to clutch at first, but if the new aspirant will put away enthusiasm and study to be simple ; if he will devote himself to mastering details

instead of letting details master him ; and despising adventitious aids will rely solely upon himself and his own strong and determined will, he cannot fail to achieve a lasting success !





No. 9.—THE FERRETING MEMBER.

THIS almost all public bodies, there is one member whose especial delight is to obtain some special information in advance. In order to accomplish this he is compelled to ferret about behind the scenes, into the secret and sacred places of official life, to catch rumour as it flies and so make it subservient to the object he has in view. He must not be too particular either as to the source or authority of his information. A surmise, a hint, a whispered word is more prized by him than an absolute statement which anyone can understand and fathom. In looking for items, the Ferrreting Member never thinks of looking after anything

which can benefit either himself or anybody else : and so he often puts his nose unwittingly into an unsavoury mess, and before now, he has had that interesting facial organ rubbed into it most beautifully. But he still pursues his way, sniffing after parochial sin, ever longing to get a private view in advance of some parochial scandal. He will tell you privately and confidentially that he has had information that such and such things are happening. The whispered slander is sent on its way with uplifted hands and upturned eyes, and with a mysterious expression of countenance which is peculiar to the Ferreting Member. It goes on from mouth to mouth, gathering as it goes, until at last the error of twopence halfpenny in a rate-collector's account is made to amount to thousands of pounds. Rumour never by any chance reduces the basis of any alleged wrong. It always passes it on with interest. The Ferreting Member has been the means of starting a whole family of rumours. Some have been strangled almost at birth ; others have collapsed under infantile complaints, such

as measles, but some have grown up to manhood, and become perfect aldermen in obesity, with no more life-sustaining power about them than that obtained from the vitality inherent in all lies, and from the love of scandal to be found in humanity. It is indeed no exaggeration to say that a mere whispered or suggested slander goes on its way through the world, doing its wicked and diabolical work for many years before its existence is known to the party affected. This is not a pleasant thought, and great responsibility attaches to individuals like the Ferreting Member, who are not content to wait till any particular scandal is officially reported, but who must needs pass current wild and exaggerated statements which, in most cases, turn out to be baseless as the fabric of a vision !

The Ferreting Member is not gifted with any of the graces of oratory. Privately he indulges in flashes of mystery, as in public he is famous for his flashes of silence ! He has been known to address a few words to the Chair now and

then, for the purpose of setting forth some terrible mare's-nest he has discovered, or it may be to say some unkind thing about some one who has incurred his wrath. Providence is very kind in apportioning gifts, for should it implant in the breast of a man the very apotheosis of diabolism, it checks and thwarts any unlicensed use of it by depriving the individual of any great facility of speech. Whenever the Ferreting Member attempts a speech he becomes sensibly pale and agitated, and you can see the courage running out of his finger-ends. He immediately assumes a frightened look, and his long body leans forward, on tip-toe, as though he were addressing an invisible audience on the other side of a wall. The fright, but too evident on his countenance, is no doubt caused by the fear that his invisible audience may possibly give him an unpleasant surprise ; and this kind of feeling will always be found amongst men who work privately instead of acting openly. And then how mixed and confused is his statement ! In

mental temperament he is somewhat akin to Mr. Crabbe, the glazier of Middlemarch, “who gathered news and groped among it dimly”; and this must ever be, where instead of an open manly statement, the speaker depends upon insinuation made life-like by a shrug of the shoulder or an upturning of the eyes.

With what delight does he revel in a dirt-pie! To him it is more savoury than substantial food; and as he passes the mud round to his friends to taste, he takes infinite credit and delight in having been the means of discovering it.

He once heard that a fellow-member was desirous to promote a relative to a vacant parochial office; and the Ferreting Member's little world was sensibly agitated at the prospect of such a magnificent *bonne-bouche*, and the Ferreting Member was supplied with pabulum for weeks. The member was denounced publicly and privately as the perpetrator of a monstrous act of nepotism almost unparalleled in official life.

Years passed, and the Ferreting Member in

his turn was guilty of precisely the same crime, and he was utterly amazed to find the weapons he had previously used were now cruelly turned against himself.

It often happens that the most fruitful field for the Ferreting Member's peculiar mission is to be found at home ; but like the old lady who looked up to the ceiling and sang Hallelujah when the plate came round, the Ferreting Member prefers to carry on his operations anywhere but under his own nose.

“ To thine own self be true,
And it will follow as the night the day ;
Thou canst not then be wrong to any man,”

may be a comforting reflection, but how few of us are capable of devoting any attention upon our own state, when the world is so full of the wickedness of other people crying aloud for our interference and correction. And after all, the principle of considering the greatest happiness of the greatest number which should be the aim of every true citizen, teaches us to disregard the

mere unit to be found at home, and to concentrate all our attention upon the great world outside.

The Ferreting Member devotes considerable attention in checking what he terms extravagance ; but when in office he never attempted to curtail the money spent upon his own cakes and ale ; indeed, it may be stated that in all his operations there is present a saving clause which excepts himself. His whole mission is to look after other people, and if he would only carry out his self-appointed mission kindly and openly, he might yet become a useful member, but his past conduct is inexplicable, and his whole career a parochial conundrum.

His career has not been so much a matter of education, as a matter of birth. He was born with a desire to look after other people. It was natural to him from the first.

When Napoleon was asked how he had won his victories, he replied " *Mon Dieu, c'est ma*

nature. Je suis fait comme ça," and so it is with the Ferreting Member.

Should he have found time when hunting up scandals to read Lord Lytton's Fables in Song, he may recognise his prototype in the ancient fox of fable :—

“ I am the ancient fox of fable ;
Few are the men I have met with able
To understand me ; and still more few
The men that listen to those that do.”





No. 10.—THE ACTIVE MEMBER.



N most public boards there is a member who pushes himself to the front, and stops there too, for a season, to the astonishment of his fellow members. Without any special fitness for controlling or governing his fellow creatures; without much education, ability, or experience of life or character; without any specially striking attribute or any particularly ennobling quality, he yet manages to occupy a commanding position in the parochial world. Strangers often ask for an explanation of such a strange local phenomenon, and the only one I have yet heard given is that this "peculiar local phenomenon" is so "active." This, I firmly believe, is the only

possible explanation, and, let me add, it is not a bad one. Whilst some members gain a position through reckless oratory, or assumed superiority, or superabundant impudence, or faithful service, or force of character, or exceptional ability, the Active Member relies upon none of these things, but takes his place by virtue only of his activity. He has never been known to possess any initiative power, or controlling force, or reasoning faculty, but he is gifted with three valuable attributes of character. The first is activity, the second is activity, and the third is activity !

This attribute takes him over a large field. Parochially he is *hic et ubique*, for he is on every committee, and attends every meeting, and has a finger in every pie. His annual attendances are prodigious in quantity, if not valuable in quality. He is the parochial "not out," for he is always at the wicket, on every day of the week, Sundays included. He is imbued with the notion that the parochial coach would come to a standstill if he were to leave it even for a day.

Although the Active Member never sheds a ray of light upon any parochial question, he is useful nevertheless. Through a somewhat extended experience he has come to have a smattering of knowledge. He is superficially learned, but specifically ignorant. His activity teaches him to walk rapidly round a subject, whilst his lack of mental power effectually prevents him doing anything more. To the outside world he has the character of usefulness, for no one gives more time to the public service, and if real usefulness were determined by the mere length of time the Active Member would be without doubt the most useful member amongst us. But the length of years is no test whatever of the usefulness of life. It is, of course, a mere platitude to remark that one man may do more good in twenty years than another who may live on for all time, but even platitudes have to be quoted occasionally. In the great world our active men are noted for a grand diversity of opinion, but the member who is parochially

active is quite unable to display any activity outside his small surroundings. He might, perhaps, after displaying unusual activity on dust carts and slopping turn on his activity to paving charges and "sich like;" but he would never think of emulating the example of the late Earl of Derby, who found time to produce his noble version of "The Iliad" as an amusement, Mr. Gladstone's "Studies on Homer,"—and, indeed, his studies on everything and everybody are a lasting monument of industry and activity. And then what a grand example of activity did the late Sir George Cornewall Lewis leave behind him. In the intervals of his official labours he occupied himself with inquiries into a wide range of subjects—history, politics, philology, anthropology, and antiquarianism!

But it is needless to pursue this line of thought. The Active Member of course is not gifted by education to display any noble activity of mind whatever outside his little world. He only relieves his mind occasionally by airing his importance to the small clerks.

It is not unusual for this type of character to find pleasure in reminding gentlemen of education and position, such as the Vestry Clerk, and Surveyor, and others, that they only are "paid officers," and as such, altogether inferior beings to himself ; but this, after all, is a harmless amusement, and whilst it pleases the Active Member it has no effect whatever upon the gentlemen addressed. When one sees the fussy importance which the Active Member occasionally gives himself in his dealings with officials, the story of Dr. Abernethy and the grocer rushes unbidden to the mind. The doctor called upon the fussy, and all-important dealer in spices, with a view to secure his vote at a certain election. The grocer assumed great airs, and proceeded to deliver himself profoundly on the great importance of the occasion. "I know, young man," he went on to say, "I know the nature of the great favour you now seek at my hands. You want my vote and interest at a most critical period of your life, and——"

“Nothing of the kind, my good man,” remarked Abernethy, “I only want a pennyworth of plums, and if you don’t make haste and serve me I shall take my patronage elsewhere.”

If the parochial officials had but the courage to order a pennyworth of plums whenever the active and fussy members misbehave themselves what tons upon tons of plums they might give away to the poor!





No. II.—THE TECHNICAL MEMBER.



THE Technical Member, if not the most popular, is certainly one of the most useful members of a public body. Without him business would proceed on rough and ready lines, without regard to precedent or propriety ; the majesty of law would be set at naught, and sections and sub-sections laughed into insignificance. He is our grand stickler for forms ; our only advocate of black letter law ; our interpreter of statutes ; our authority on all matters of procedure ; and our never failing judge and mentor. No member has been known to rise so often on points of order, and he is so thoroughly persistent that he never tires of rising again and

again. So deeply implanted in his mind is his desire to be technically right, that if, by any chance he made a slip himself, he would rise, or rather, stand to order against himself, and would not sit down until he had carried his point.

It will be evident from this that he is thoroughly consistent, and in this lies his great strength. Friend or foe are alike the object of his attention, and he is as ready to put the Chair to rights as he would be the Youngest Member, whilst the Vestry Clerk is the especial object of his regard. He gives the Vestry Clerk such hard nuts to crack occasionally that the strongest pair of crackers have often to be brought from a neighbouring parish before the true legal kernel can be reached. Should the Technical Member succeed in lodging a regular poser on the frontispiece of the Vestry Clerk he is as delighted as when a youngster gets another boy's head into chancery. At such times his face positively beams with delight, and if any one had left him a magnificent legacy of law free of duty, he could

not present a more outward appearance of satisfaction.

In most public bodies the Technical Member is a limb of the law, and the gentleman who regulates our proceedings is very much a limb of the law. He lives in the serenest atmosphere of law, and this fact is brought prominently to our notice on many occasions ; but not offensively so. Whilst so many members are pitchforked into our local governing boards with an absolute ignorance of law and the proper conduct of public business, it is well that such gentlemen as the Technical Member should also be returned. The science of legislation, whether local or imperial, is unfortunately looked upon as a matter of little importance by the people. Every other state in life, every other occupation, art or science, requires some kind of preparative study, more or less severe. Apprenticeships are held to be necessary in almost every art, commercial or mechanical ; but every man thinks himself qualified to legislate for his fellows without any preparation whatever.

Cicero was of a different opinion. "It is necessary," says he, "for a senator to be thoroughly acquainted with the constitution, and this," he declares, "is a knowledge of the most extensive kind."

Now although I make no pretence to claim for the Technical Member that profound knowledge of the Constitution as laid down by Cicero, his knowledge may be said to be relatively profound to that of most other members of the body to which he belongs. And further, if his knowledge can hardly be called absolutely profound, and if his interpretation of Acts of Parliament is not always even approximately correct, he yet towers above his fellows in one grand essential—a sincere desire to make himself master of all legal subjects. To deserve success is often grander than the mere achievement of it, and if the members of our local boards would only apply themselves with as much zeal as the Technical Member to mastering the duties of their position, they would deserve, if they did not achieve, success, and the

tone and character of our public assemblies would be improved.

The Technical Member again, in his own person, is a magnificent example of obedience to law. It is related of Socrates that he made a promise with himself to observe the laws of his country, and this example has been followed most religiously in the case of the Technical Member. With the most profound regard for principle he, at times, not unnaturally, overlooks the importance of facts. Expediency is a word he utterly abhors, and he would rather defend a principle and lose, than have recourse to expediency and win. Although in addressing the Chair he has the habit of making a curve of his body, there is nothing like a curve to be detected in his public career. Like Mrs. Battle he believes in the "rigour of the game," and nothing but the most extreme rigour too. One cannot complain of this, for where from carelessness or design so many members are prone to revoke, it is absolutely necessary that we should have some one on

the look out to check all such irregular proceedings. On the whole, the Technical Member acts a most necessary part, and as in addition to his legal qualifications, he is intensely respectable, it will be seen that he is a most valuable and respected unit of parochiality.





No. 12.—THE SCREAMING MEMBER.



N most assemblies there is to be found one member who screams away his time, and almost screams away the patience of his fellow members. Such men are usually afflicted with deafness, and they not unnaturally, perhaps, fancy that every one surrounding them is in the same unfortunate state. In any case their affliction prevents an absolute realisation of the misery inflicted upon others, which should be remembered to their credit when forming an estimate of their character and power of making themselves obnoxious. The Screaming Member looks vacantly at you when charged with deafening the multitude, for he is quite un-

conscious of having done anything of the kind. Some idea of the volume of sound he emits may be gathered from the fact that a mere whisper from him is more like the report of a gun than anything else, whilst a high note is terribly suggestive of the Woolwich Infant. As he cannot hear what he says himself it is curious to watch the effect which his spoken utterances have upon himself, after he has watched the terrible effect they have first produced on others. Unable to hear the words he fires ever and anon with such wonderful rapidity, as though they came hissing hot from Perkins's steam gun, he can only imagine that they have struck home by witnessing the indignation or alarm visible in the countenances surrounding him. He is quite unable to realise the proper weight of words, and so, of course, fails to make any impression from an oratorical point of view. His speech is not moulded by circumstances which may occur at the time of speaking. He always comes prepared with a whole armoury of carefully prepared shots,

which he fires off indiscriminately. It is of no use to call him to order, for though he may see the Chairman's hammer at work, driving home any number of tenpenny nails, he only regards it as a most decided indication of approval of what he has said, and he proceeds still further to aggravate the evil, and to set all order at defiance.

The Screaming Member takes no note of time. He heeds not the bye-law which regulates the length of a speech, and no power has yet been invented capable of enforcing against him mere rules and regulations. And no one knows this better than the Screaming Member himself; for whilst openly defying all attempts to control his screaming utterances, he smiles sweetly upon the vain and weak endeavours of his opponents. He is conscious of being master of the position—as the only member privileged to say the severest things of others without incurring the risk of receiving any of them back again with interest. He hurls his Rolands upon them like hail, without any fear of Olivers.

One must acknowledge that this peculiar and exceptional privilege is too often abused, and the Screaming Member, although at times plain and pertinent, is too often involved and impertinent. Although his voice is always pitched in a high key, yet at times it is pitched in the highest and shrillest key imaginable, and then our friend screams most screamingly of all. This generally happens when he has nothing to scream worth listening to ; and on such occasions I am reminded of Dr. Beecher, who, on returning from church one day, said to his son, Henry, who tells the story, " It seems to me that I never made a worse sermon than I did this morning."

" Why, father," said his son, " I never heard you preach so loud in all my life."

" Yes," said the father, " I always holloa when I haven't anything to say ! "

Anatomists have dissected and laid bare all the details and secret workings of the organs of speech, all the details of their complex and wondrous structure. They have shown us the

formation of the larynx, with its muscles, cartilages, and membranes, by which vocal sounds are modulated ; but the anatomist is yet to be born capable of analysing or explaining the vocal sounds of the Screaming Member. His " pair of jaws " have defied everyone now living. Should anyone visit this sublunary sphere capable of taking to pieces his marvellous " pair of jaws," I can only express a hope that he will be altogether unable to put them together again.





No. 13.—THE UNIVERSAL GOVERNMENT BOARD.

THE report of the Local Government Board for 1878-79 has recently been issued. It grows in bulk perceptibly, for it covers a larger field every year, and indeed seems to vie with the "London Directory" in the number of its pages and the variety of its subjects. The net of the Local Government Board is small enough to catch the most minute particle ; whilst its capacious maw enables it to swallow the most formidable bill ever made into an Act. The Board at Whitehall is a kind of legislative dust-bin, into which is thrown enactments which other Government departments refuse to acknowledge. Nothing comes amiss to it ; and it would, if re-

quested, take charge of the Channel Fleet, or organize an expedition to the North Pole. The Universal Government Board, if allowed by the country to go on unchecked in its absorbing career, will soon embrace everything "in the heavens above and on the earth beneath, and in the waters under the earth." For the moment, gigantic enterprises are in fashion. The Universal Provider is in demand, and the modest capitalist is sent to the wall. As it is commercially, so it is officially. The Universal Provider at Whitehall is the Government pet just now, and is patronized, and indeed encouraged to extend its field of operations to an indefinite extent. Let me try and enumerate some of its present duties.

In the first place, then, it supervises the whole system of Poor Law administration—a duty which it inherited from the Poor Law Board. This was soon found to be a mere bagatelle. In one branch of it, that of poor relief, there were only about one million paupers to look after, and about

fifteen thousand officers to control ; and in the year ended Lady Day, 1878, the insignificant sum of £7,688,650 was expended upon the poor. The whole system of Poor Law administration is, of course, cut up into different departments or sections, one of which would alone keep an ordinary Government Department employed.

For instance, there are the vagrants—a troublesome set of individuals numbering in 1878 no less than 4,216. These gentlemen have received no ordinary attention of late ; and new rules and regulations have been issued for their especial be-hoof, and single cells have been provided for them, in order to destroy the gregarious character of the tribe ; but they are increasing in number, and the Universal Government Board will have to bestow more fatherly care upon them before they can be brought into social decency and good order. Then there is the large army of insane poor—a constituency requiring special attention and most careful handling. In 1858, this mass of suffering humanity mustered no less than 20,975 souls, and

in 1878 it had actually increased to 58,591. These are startling figures—indeed, so appalling are they, that the thought naturally rushes to the mind that it is possible, we will say probable, that they do not—we had almost said they cannot—receive that careful and solicitous and ever-watchful attention at the hands of the Universal Provider which the necessities of their case demand. But there—60,000 lunatics, more or less, is a small matter to the authorities at Whitehall!

The sick poor, one would think, must demand special care, and, so far as one can judge, they appear to have fared well at the hands of the authorities. It seems like going back to the Dark Ages when we read reports made on the subject shortly before the passing of the Metropolitan Poor Act in 1867. In Bermondsey there were then no means of isolating fever cases, and no separate kitchens for the sick wards. In St. Olave's the same complaints were made, with the addition that the pauper nurses could not read the labels on the bottles. In Rotherhithe the sick

wards were described as defective as regards light, ventilation, and lavatory accommodation. In Newington the whole of the wards were insufficiently ventilated, and the medical officer reported that the atmosphere of the wards at night was overpowering ; and an equally bad state of things existed at Lambeth and St. George the Martyr. In addition to the superior—indeed, ample—accommodation now provided for the sick poor throughout the Metropolis, the recently-passed Poor Law Amendment Act makes provision for non-pauper cases of infection. Formerly all such cases could be treated only as paupers, but now the Asylums Board can receive all such on payment of certain fees and expenses. Whatever shortcomings may be charged against the authorities in other respects, they have undoubtedly devoted much time and attention to the sick poor, who are now treated with great care and consideration.

The Universal Government Board has not only ordinary paupers and vagrants and imbeciles and

sick poor to look after, but an immense constituency of children, located in certain schools and ships ; and no doubt some of this present generation will live long enough to see the whole system of elementary education placed within the grasp of a Board which must eventually swallow up every other Board in the kingdom.

In enumerating other duties of the great Universal Government Board, we have only space for a brief summary, or we shall fill a whole page before we have got half through them. In addition to the foregoing, the Universal Government Board superintends the emigration of paupers ; and, judging from statistics, the clerk whose particular duty it is to attend to this department is not enamoured of emigration as an outlet for pauperism ; for the numbers have steadily but surely decreased of late, from 893 sent out of the country in 1871 to twenty-three only sent last year.

Recent legislation has placed all questions affecting public health and sanitary reform under

the especial care of the Universal Government Board, and during 1878 the urban sanitary authorities expended nearly seventeen millions and a half, and those in the rural districts rather more than three hundred and sixty thousand pounds. The rates raised by the former during the last three years show an increase of twenty-two per cent. ; but as some counterbalance, it is pointed out that the rateable value of these districts has risen seventeen per cent. Last year their total outstanding loans exceeded forty-six millions, those of the rural authorities being under half a million. This department of work is so extensive, and demands such close supervision, that I am lost in wonder how it can possibly be controlled efficiently and with a due knowledge of the particular localities and authorities ; but a Board which has accomplished so much, and which receives every accession of work with a light heart, may be expected to regard the immense questions arising out of public health and sanitary reform as mere trifles, light as air. Of

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